

Department of the Interior  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office  
Hidden Valley Road  
Carlsbad, California 92009  
Phone: 760/431-9440  
Fax: 760/431-9624

# News Release



<http://carlsbad.fws.gov>

(SC)

05-001

Contact: Jane Hendron, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office – 760/431-9440 ext. 205

For Release: January 4, 2005

## **U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE REVISES SANTA ANA SUCKER CRITICAL HABITAT DESIGNATION**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today published a revised final designation of critical habitat for the federally threatened Santa Ana sucker (*Catostomus santaanae*). Approximately 8,305 acres of essential habitat in portions of the San Gabriel River and Big Tujunga Creek in Los Angeles County, California are included in the revised designation.

A draft economic analysis was prepared to provide a comprehensive overview of estimated costs associated with the listing of the Santa Ana sucker under the Endangered Species Act and the designation of 21,129 acres of streams in Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties as critical habitat.

The draft analysis estimated conservation costs could range from \$21.8 to \$30.5 million over the next 20 years. Costs associated with implementing conservation measures prescribed in Habitat Conservation Plans and consultations with other Federal agencies were included in the analysis.

Designation of critical habitat in the San Gabriel River and Big Tujunga Creek is estimated to result in annualized impacts of \$926,000.

Essential habitat for the species that lies within the boundaries of the Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan and areas to be covered by the programmatic consultation for the Santa Ana Sucker Conservation Program and Associated Maintenance and Operation Activities of Existing Water Facilities in the Santa Ana River were excluded from the February 26, 2004 critical habitat designation. These areas are also excluded from this revised critical habitat designation because the benefits of excluding them outweigh the benefits of including them in critical habitat.

Based on a review of areas included in the February 26, 2004 critical habitat designation, and comments and information received on the proposed rule and draft economic analysis, the Service removed several additional areas from critical habitat designation, as follows: Little Tujunga Creek, and portions of the Santa Ana River and its floodplain. These exclusions total about 12,864 acres.

“In areas where critical habitat is designated, the Service will work cooperatively with Federal agencies and private landowners to address the conservation needs of the Santa Ana sucker,” said Steve Thompson, Manager of the Service’s California-Nevada Operations.

The designation of critical habitat for the Santa Ana sucker is in response to a lawsuit filed against the Service by California Trout, Inc., the California-Nevada Chapter of the American Fisheries Society, the Center for Biological Diversity, and the Friends of the River.

In a court ruling, the Service was ordered to designate critical habitat for the Santa Ana sucker by February 26, 2004, and until such designation was made the Service was enjoined from completing any consultations with Federal agencies on projects that may affect the species.

To comply with the court order, the Service published a final rule without prior public notice and review. The final rule was published in the Federal Register on February 26, 2004. To ensure adequate public participation in the rulemaking process, a proposed rule was published concurrently with the final rule.

Following publication of the final and concurrent proposed rules, a consent decree was signed by the Service and the plaintiffs allowing the Service to resume consultations on projects that may affect the Santa Ana sucker. The Service was required to complete a revised critical habitat designation by December 21, 2004.

The Santa Ana sucker is a fish native to southern California. Much like other members of the sucker family, the Santa Ana sucker has large, thick lips and a small mouth that enable it to ‘vacuum’ algae and invertebrates from stream beds. Measuring about six inches long, the Santa Ana sucker has a dark, blotchy back with a silvery underside. Santa Ana suckers appear to be most abundant where water is clean and clear, although they can tolerate seasonally murky water.

Threats to the Santa Ana sucker include the destruction and alteration of its habitat from urban development, channeling of streams, water diversions, and the introduction of nonnative competitors and predators.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

FWS

*For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, visit our home page at <http://www.fws.gov>*